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ABSTRACT

Twenty-two transition programs illustrating effective community collaboration for youth with disabilities in Minnesota are profiled. These programs were selected because they applied a set of 10 quality standards developed to improve the transition process and adult outcomes for these youth, as well as to increase the cost effectiveness and efficiency of transition services and planning. Each profile includes information on: (1) participant disabilities, (2) ages served, (3) areas of collaboration, and (4) groups collaborating. Areas of collaboration included, among others: information sharing, staff sharing, co-funding, joint training plans, joint transition planning, shared public relations activities, shared resource library, program sharing, and assessment sharing. Descriptive information for each program includes an overview, a discussion of the need for the program, how the program meets the need, results and effectiveness data, and specific groups collaborating. Program address, telephone number, and name of a contact person are also provided. (DB)

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Transition Strategies That Work

Volume II

Profiles of Community Collaboration

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Volume II

Profiles of Community Collaboration

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Preface

During the 1990–91 school year, educators, community service providers, and parents of young adults with disabilities from throughout Minnesota were asked to identify criteria they viewed as critical to assisting students with disabilities in making a successful transition from high school to adult life. These criteria were then compiled into a set of quality standards that were used as the basis for the first volume of *Transition Strategies That Work*. These standards have been reviewed by hundreds of readers over the past three years and have "withstood the test of time" thus justifying their reprinting in this document. They are highlighted on the following page.

The first volume of *Transition Strategies That Work*, published in 1991, was highly acclaimed throughout Minnesota and across the United States. This document contained profiles of twenty-three of the many exemplary transition programs in Minnesota. Readers from all over the country appreciated the availability of concrete examples of programs and strategies that really did improve the transition process for young adults with disabilities. Readers also commented on the importance of having the names, addresses and phone numbers of the program developers so that they could adopt and adapt creative programs and strategies that were already in existence without always having to "reinvent the wheel".

Because of the success of this document, and because new exemplary transition programs and strategies continue to be developed, we are proud to present *Transition Strategies That Work, Volume II: Profiles of Community Collaboration*. As with the first publication, a group of parents, educators, and community service providers gathered to write about interagency strategies that meet the standards of quality described on the next page and that they were willing to share with their colleagues in other parts of Minnesota and across the United States. The continued work of the authors of this document truly is exemplary and we gratefully acknowledge their contributions on behalf of all youth and young adults with disabilities.

As in Volume I, readers are assisted in identifying the programs that most closely model strategies applicable in their situations by a list of descriptors in the margin of each page. The descriptors are:

- Participant Disabilities
- Ages Served
- Areas of Collaboration
- Groups Collaborating

Within each profile is an overview of the program, a description of the needs it was designed to meet, a summary of its establishment and operation, an account of its results, and additional comments made by the authors.

Sandra J. Thompson
Stephanie Corbey
Minnesota Department of Education

Quality Standards

Educators and agency staff from throughout Minnesota were asked to identify criteria they viewed as critical to effective planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to adult life. These criteria were compiled into a set of quality standards that have been used as the basis for this guide. Programs included in this guide were selected based on their ability to meet the following quality standards:

- Students, along with their families/advocates, are included and involved in the IEP/transition planning process.
- Transition planning acknowledges each student's total life experience.
- Appropriate agency personnel are actively involved in each student's transition process.
- Students receive training to increase awareness of their strengths and limitations, and to attain skills in self-advocacy.
- A comprehensive personal transition file and action plan is developed for each student and given to them to use after high school.
- Transition team members are informed, creative, and committed to collaborating for student success.
- At age fourteen, or in ninth grade, adult outcomes in the areas of home living, jobs and job training, post-secondary education, community participation, and recreation and leisure are addressed on the IEP, and goals are developed and implemented in all documented need areas.
- Transition goals are based on student needs and desired adult outcomes.
- Current level of performance is determined by situational/environmental assessments that include student experience.
- IEP goals address life skills that are taught in natural environments.

This guide profiles twenty-two of the many exemplary transition programs in Minnesota. Each has each been developed to improve the transition process and adult outcomes for secondary students with disabilities, as well as to increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of transition services and planning. It is hoped that this guide will provide options for readers to further explore and adapt for use with the students they serve.

Introduction

Communication and commitment are critical to meeting the challenge of identifying the services and supports needed by individuals as they make the transition from high school to adult life. This document highlights collaborative efforts to assist youth with disabilities in meeting their goals for adult life. This can prove to be a tremendous challenge given the current limitations in funding and resources faced by schools and adult service agencies. Though funding presents an ongoing issue, the authors of this document have realized that an *over*-emphasis on funding barriers can severely limit creativity and cause collaborators to give up at the expense of those they are charged to serve.

A focus on collaboration, not as an outcome but as a coordinating process that leads to successful adult outcomes, is illustrated throughout this document. Minnesota has been a leader in emphasizing the need and implementing an avenue for interagency collaboration to occur. Minnesota's state and local education and community service agencies have been firmly committed to the notion that improvements in transition services can only result from systematic statewide planning and policy development that clearly articulates the direction for needed changes. Minnesota has taken formal policy and legislative steps to support transition services and interagency planning.

Transition from school to adult life can be a major challenge for individuals who need to make important decisions about their future. Transition planning teams at both the individual and community levels also face a challenge as they address individual and community needs while clarifying the gaps and overlaps in responsibility that often occur during the transition process. This document illustrates real life examples of what is possible when communities collaborate to provide opportunities for employment, parent and student empowerment, independent living, post-secondary and community education, and access to assistive technology. The progress made in the area of transition in Minnesota represents the collective efforts by many people who have worked diligently and enthusiastically to improve transition services for the young adults they serve. There is in our state a positive climate for change, as the momentum achieved in recent years continues.

> ***Interagency collaboration is about multiple organizations entering into a well defined relationship that is beneficial for all involved.***
> ***This begins by setting clear goals and expectations to meet a shared need.***
> ***The relationship is based on commitment by all involved to share responsibility, authority, accountability, and resources.***
>
> Hans Swemle, Dakota, Inc.
> from *Regional Perspectives*, 1993

Dakota County Retail Occupations Training Program

1

Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
15025 Glazier Avenue, Suite 101, Apple Valley, MN 55124
Contact: Kathy Raymor, DRS, (612) 431-9412
Steve Schumacher, Goodwill/Easter Seal, (612) 646-2591

Overview

The Retail Training Program is an interagency effort to provide assessment and skill training in retail occupations in a real work environment (Target Greatland in Apple Valley) for high school students with disabilities. Students must be between the ages sixteen and twenty-one, apply and be eligible for Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), be Dakota County residents, be interested in working in a retail occupation, and have their team (special education, parents, student, vocational education, DRS, social worker, etc.) agree on retail training as an appropriate plan.

The Need

Dakota County is one of the fastest growing areas in the state in general population and students with disabilities. The demand for community-based training programs has increased accordingly. Due to distance and lack of public transportation, it is not feasible to access existing programs in Minneapolis or St. Paul. Programs needed to be established in the local area to meet vocational needs and also to expand the variety of jobs and training opportunities beyond the traditional food service and janitorial occupations.

Meeting the Need

A retail training program for Dakota County special needs high school students started at Target Greatland in Apple Valley in July 1992. Because of the program's success, a second training site was added at the Target in West St. Paul in September 1993. The training is part of the student's IEP, and the student receives credit for the time spent in training. The training is individualized, both in content and length. The first week is an evaluation and job try-out period, with students working in different areas and jobs within the store, under the supervision of the Training Coordinator. Areas of work available to students are: stockroom, customer service, cashier, fitting room attendant, food service, clerical, and cart attendant. After the first week a training plan is developed and the student works with a job coach toward the student's own chosen area of interest for the next five weeks in addition to participating in daily classroom training at Target. The student then spends the next four to six weeks doing an internship within Target to gain more independent work experience, supervised primarily by Target staff, but still under the supervision of the Training Coordinator. The student's progress toward meeting their work goals is evaluated weekly. Meetings to formally review the student's progress are held with involved team members (student, parent, Goodwill/Easter Seal staff, DRS counselor,

Participant Disabilities

- All disabilities

Ages

- 16 to 21

Areas of Collaboration

- Co-funding
- Sharing Staff
- Joint Plans
- Shared Programs

Types of Groups Collaborating

- DRS
- Rehabilitation Facilities
- Employment Training Centers
- Special Education
- Vocational Education

special and vocational education staff) after the one week evaluation, at mid-term and during the final week.

Agencies collaborate by providing the following:

- The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the referral and funding agency.
- Goodwill/Easter Seal (a rehabilitation facility) provides the training personnel, job placement, and follow-up.
- JTPA provides wages for the students during training.
- Local school districts provide transportation, release from school, school credit, and support services from the Work Experience Handicapped Coordinator and/or special education case manager.
- Secondary Vocational Education-Special Needs participates in funding reimbursement.
- Target Greatland provides the training site, classroom space, employee discounts, and supportive staff.

Wages paid to trainees are $4.25 per hour for training, classroom, and internship time. The Dakota County Employment Training Center (JTPA) funds these wages, and the students are paid through Goodwill/Easter Seal. Although students are not actually Target employees, they receive a Target employee discount. If a student completes the program and is hired by Target or another retail operation, they receive the prevailing wage paid by that employer.

Students are assisted with job seeking skills and job placement by Goodwill/Easter Seal. Follow-up and interventions, if needed, are also provided after a student is placed on the job. Although the training takes place at Target, the skills are transferable to other retail settings, and the student may prefer or be better placed for a different work setting.

Results

The response to the program from the local school districts, students, agencies, and Target Greatland has been very favorable. The program started in July 1992, and new groups of five to seven students start approximately every ten to twelve weeks. Seven Dakota County high school programs have referred students for training. Other school districts in the Twin Cities area and other Target stores have expressed an interest in starting similar training programs in their areas, and other retailers have expressed an interest in hiring students not hired by Target.

During the 1992–1993 fiscal year, which ended September 30, 1993, thirty-nine students were served with twelve students still in training. Twenty-two students had completed the training with thirteen (59%) placed in competitive jobs. Another eight (36%) were still in placement and one had returned to school.

Groups Collaborating

- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Goodwill/Easter Seal (a rehabilitation facility)
- JTPA (Dakota County Employment Training Center)

Career Connections

2

University of Minnesota, 16 Johnston Hall
101 Pleasant Street SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455
Contact: Betty Aune, (612) 624-6884
Donna Johnson, (612) 626-8035

Overview

Career Connections is a three-year model demonstration project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and Disability Services at the University of Minnesota. It serves students with a variety of disabilities. More than one hundred thirty students have been served by the project.

The goal of Career Connections is to improve the career potential of college students with disabilities. This is accomplished by training employers and on-campus service providers on the unique needs and the skills of people with disabilities and by creating career services which will meet the diverse needs of our students. One of the ways Career Connections is improving the career potential of students with disabilities is by promoting diversity in hiring at the College of Liberal Arts Job Fair.

The Need

A recent Harris poll found that two-thirds of all people with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed. Through the Career Connections project, we have also found that students are not prepared to meet employers and often do not know their employment rights as people with disabilities. In July 1992, a local corporation called a group of college career counselors from across the country to address the issue of how to more effectively recruit people with disabilities and people of color.

As a result, the director of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Career Development Office, the director of the Martin Luther King Program and Career Connections' staff collaborated to develop a job fair which places special emphasis on opportunities for people of color and people with disabilities. The project received a Community Building Grant from the University of Minnesota Student Affairs Office to promote the collaborative efforts of these three departments.

Meeting the Need

Some of the ways in which we are meeting the needs of students and employers are by:

- Collaboratively recruiting employers by tapping into the network of employers with whom College of Liberal Arts Career Development Office, the Martin Luther King Program and Career Connections have established contacts and by drafting a joint letter of support to them.

Participant Disabilities

- **Learning Disabilities**
- **Psychiatric Disabilities**
- **Head Injuries**
- **Mobility Impaired**
- **Multiple Disabilities**
- **Vision Impairments**
- **Hearing Impairments**

Ages

- **18 and over**

Areas of Collaboration

- **Information Sharing**
- **Joint Planning**
- **Program Sharing**

Types of Groups Collaborating

- **Career Connections**
- **Career Development Office**
- **Martin Luther King Program**

- Offering a three-hour workshop to employers who attend the job fair to inform them about issues related to employing people of color and people with disabilities. Topics include: disability etiquette, legal guidelines in the hiring process, determining reasonable accommodations in the workplace, and preparing supervisors and co-workers to work with a diverse work force.
- Presenting job fair orientation sessions for students which address how to research companies and prepare a resume and which train students on their employment rights as people with disabilities including information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, disclosure and accommodations.
- Developing a database of employers who are interested in becoming involved with the career development of students with disabilities and students of color by:
  - Presenting at employer forums.
  - Serving as an internship site.
  - Serving as a mentor.
  - Conducting informational interviews or job shadowing.

Results

The collaborative effort continued in 1994. Success will primarily be measured by increased diversity in the hiring practices of companies recruiting on campus. Other measures of success are an increased comfort level by employers in meeting with people with disabilities and people of color, and increased awareness of legal rights and improved self-advocacy by people with disabilities and people of color.

Comments

By collaborating on the job fair, the Martin Luther King Program, the College of Liberal Arts Career Development Office and Career Connections demonstrate a unified effort to promote the needs of all students enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota. By working together, we have developed a network of opportunities to increase the career potential of our students.

Groups Collaborating

- Career Connections (a program of Disability Services, University of Minnesota)
- CLA Career Development Office, University of Minnesota
- Martin Luther King Program

Collaborative Planning for Supported Employment

3

Mankato District 77 and Maple River District 72
Division of Rehabilitation and Mankato Rehabilitation Center, Inc.
Contact: Michael Stewart, Secondary Transition Coordinator
1000 Broad Street, Mankato, MN 56001, (507) 387-1818

Overview

Mankato District 77 and Maple River District 72, along with Division of Rehabilitation (DRS) staff and managers from the Mankato Rehabilitation Center, Inc., have developed a plan in which special needs students are provided supported employment opportunities within the Mankato area. This plan was the result of numerous meetings and visits to other sites by all parties over a period of eighteen months.

The Need

This collaborative effort began as a result of student needs for increased supported employment opportunities and the loss of professional staff due to budget cuts. With the cuts in staff in the school Work Experience Program in Mankato and the lack of employment opportunities in the rural town of Mapleton, the needs of the special population students became increasingly difficult to meet. Within the Mankato Area Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC), we realized we had four separate organizations within the Mankato area looking for and coordinating work sites for special needs individuals. Rather than have each district try to address vocational needs on their own, we used our local CTIC as the focus in developing a plan which maximizes resources.

Meeting the Need

Based on information gathered from members of the IEP team, student interest and family involvement, a referral to DRS would be initiated. Confirmation of DRS eligibility was the next step in the process. Once the student became eligible for DRS services, his or her DRS counselor referred the student to the Mankato Rehabilitation Center for community-based supported employment.

At this point, the team, which included staff from all the agencies involved as well as the student and family, would develop an individual plan based on how to best support the student in an employment setting. Decisions about a one-on-one job coach or enclave setting would be made. The type of work in which the student would be interested would be evaluated. The availability of work sites in the area of interest would also be discussed. Once these concerns were met, the logistics of meeting these needs and funding considerations would be determined.

The funding for this program is a cost shared between DRS and the local school district. Mankato Rehabilitation Center, Inc. (MRCI) bills the local school district for the cost of providing supported employment services. The local district then bills DRS for forty-eight percent of that

Participant Disabilities

- **All disabilities; requires a current IEP**

Ages Served

- **14 to 21 with a focus on junior and senior year of high school**

Areas of Collaboration

- **Information Sharing**
- **Staff Sharing**
- **Co-funding**
- **Joint Training Plans**
- **Program Sharing**
- **Assessment Sharing**

Types of Groups Collaborating

- **Public Schools**
- **Rehabilitation Centers**
- **DRS**
- **JTPA**

cost. Since the district receives fifty-two percent state reimbursement for this program, the cost to the local district is for transportation. In cases in which a student already has a one-on-one Management Aide through the local school district, the aide serves as a job coach.

Students in this program receive pay for their work and MRCI is responsible for handling all payroll, worker's compensation, and sub-minimum wage documentation when needed. The local school district still provides classroom training in a job seminar class. Six-week progress reports are scheduled and the training plan is then used by MRCI, DRS, and local school districts through the Work Experience Training Plan.

Results

The logistics of transportation seem to be the major scheduling problem. It is the feeling of all concerned, however, that transportation would be a barrier regardless of who coordinated the program. The biggest gain that can be seen at this time is that the collaborative efforts between schools, DRS, adult service providers and the community result in positive gains for the student as well as being fiscally sound, with the elimination of duplication of services between all parties.

Comments

As local school systems work to maintain programs for special needs students despite funding reductions, collaborative efforts to achieve meaningful programs are imperative. This program allows agencies to work together to achieve the goals set forth by each individual agency in the most cost-effective manner. The opportunities for students increase and make for a much smoother transition for the student and family into the world beyond high school.

Groups Collaborating

- Mankato Public Schools
- Mankato Rehabilitation Center, Inc.
- Maple River Public Schools
- Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Minnesota Valley Action Council (JTPA)

Agencies and Businesses Linked for Employment (ABLE)

4

Moorhead High School
2300 4th Avenue S, Moorhead, MN 56560
Contact: Marilyn Larson, (218) 236-6400, x 219

Overview

Agencies and Businesses Linked for Employment (ABLE) is an interagency collaboration effort between Minnesota and North Dakota that is creating a unified approach to reducing employment barriers. The group has addressed issues and formulated strategies on accessing assistive technology, job adaptations and/or modifications, and concerns employers have about the Americans with Disabilities Act. During 1994, the group will be addressing concerns – such as missing work, being late for appointments, and being gone without notice – which are related to the combined efforts of businesses, job developers, employees, and social services. The purpose of ABLE is to meet the needs of any individual who experiences barriers to successful employment, due to the individual's environment and/or disability.

The Need

Fargo/Moorhead is a unique community in which the North Dakota and Minnesota border divides the two cities. Not only does the border create problems in understanding state and federal funding issues, it also increases gaps in communication between agencies. Local businesses were being approached too frequently by job developers from different agencies (with limited success), and the client's best interests were sometimes overlooked. A change had to be made from a competitive to a collaborative approach to job development.

Meeting the Need

ABLE began in April 1990, with a small task force which included: representatives from Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program (a JTPA program), Freedom Resource Center (a center for independent living), the Moorhead Chamber of Commerce, and the Moorhead Public Schools. After a few meetings, the group invited a couple of business leaders out to lunch to discuss present concerns, barriers and future possibilities. We gradually began recruiting other agencies to collaborate with us in our effort to meet the needs of clients aged fourteen to twenty-one as well as the business sector. Today we have twenty-one agencies collaborating together. Fargo Public Schools is assisting us in producing an eight minute video presentation for businesses. (The video is now available for $25.00.) Moorhead State University assists in training and evaluating some of our clients and in duplicating our video, and Northwest Technical College helps host our business recognition breakfasts. Moorhead Chamber of Commerce provides a meet-

Participant Disabilities

All disabilities

Ages Served

14 to 21

Areas of Collaboration

- **Sharing Information**
- **Co-funding**
- **Sharing Staff**
- **Joint Transition Planning**
- **Program Sharing**
- **Assessment Sharing**
- **Interagency Training**
- **Shared Public Relations Activities**
- **Shared Training**

Types of Groups Collaborating

- **Residential Programs**
- **Rehabilitation Facilities**
- **DRS**
- **Chamber of Commerce**
- **Public Schools**
- **Social Security Administration**
- **Employment Programs**
- **Colleges and Universities**
- **ARC**

ing place for our Task Force. All participating agencies on our Job Developers group, along with various restaurants, provide sites for our rotating meetings.

Results

Strategies ABLE participants have used and are using include: an interagency (manual) assessment system which was established through the combined efforts of Moorhead State College and is individualized according to need; regular sharing of job leads; coordination of job development; community and dual-county workshops; presentations including our video; breakfasts providing information, training and recognition to our community as well as ABLE members.

Comments

ABLE took the time necessary to develop a collaborative model built on trust and commitment by all its members. Meetings are held on a rotating basis at various agency members, and chairpersons rotate regularly.

Groups Collaborating (Clay and Cass Counties)

- ARC
- Community Living Services (a residential program)
- Diversified Services, Inc. (a rehabilitation facility)
- Employment and Training Center (a rehabilitation facility)
- Fargo Chamber of Commerce
- Fargo Public Schools
- Freedom Resource Center (CIL)
- Friendship, Inc. (a rehabilitation facility)
- Glendon-Felton Public Schools
- Gull Harbor Residential Program
- Job Service of North Dakota
- Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Moorhead Chamber of Commerce
- Moorhead Public Schools
- Moorhead State University
- North Dakota Division of Rehabilitation
- Northwest Technical College
- Productive Alternatives (a rehabilitation facility)
- Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (JTPA)
- Social Security Administration
- Youth Educational Services (an alternative education program)

Cross-Agency Training

5

Duluth CTIC
800 E. Central Entrance, Duluth, MN 55811
Contact: Sue Hagge, (218) 722-6343

Overview

All the agencies in Duluth involved in supported employment work together to share training opportunities, resources, and ideas. Representatives from each agency meet monthly for ongoing communication. A list of training materials available from each agency has been compiled and shared, and job coaches can participate in any agency's training. Four special training sessions for job coaches were held at the Duluth Technical College over the fall and winter.

The Need

Clients moving from school-supported employment training to adult services supported employment or moving between different adult services agencies often experienced differences in job coach attitudes and methods. In addition, as budgets have continued to shrink, all agencies have found training dollars more and more scarce, and materials more and more expensive. If job coach training opportunities were shared, both needs could be impacted – there would be fewer differences among different agency job coaches, and training dollars could go further.

Meeting the Need

The following interagency actions were taken to improve training.

- The Duluth CTIC established a training and habilitation task force.
- Representatives from all agencies which employ and train job coaches were invited.
- The Task Force developed a list of resources available at each agency and distributed it to all.
- The Task Force created a shared training calendar, but determined that phone contacts and monthly meetings were an efficient way to disseminate this information for the Duluth area.
- Grants have been submitted to obtain funding for shared training events.
- Agencies pooled resources and volunteered time and developed a four-session training course which was offered this winter.

Results

Representatives of the involved agencies have developed good working relationships through their meetings and call upon one another

Participant Disabilities

- **All disabilities eligible for supported employment**

Ages Served

- **14 and older**

Areas of Collaboration

- **Sharing Information**
- **Shared Resource Library**
- **Joint Planning**
- **Shared Training**

Types of Groups Collaborating

- **Day Training Programs**
- **Rehabilitation Facilities**
- **School Districts**
- **Technical Colleges**
- **Community Living Projects**
- **DRS**

for assistance with various kinds of training needs. When advertisements or preview materials are received, they are shared with the entire group and information about the resource is discussed. Among the representatives there is usually at least one person who has seen or heard about the resource or its author and can provide insight to all. The training course held this winter was well received, and attendees have requested more cross-agency training. The group continues to meet and to report to the full CTIC at bimonthly meetings.

Comments

As with many things learned by this CTIC, we have discovered that the strongest aspect of this group is the communication fostered among agencies. The communication has fostered a sense of cooperation and collaboration rather than competition for who can "do the best", "serve the most", or other such attitudes. While working together, we have discovered how much we have in common and how much we all seek to provide services that people want and need. As we understand more about one another's funding sources, clientele, and governance, we are better able to support one another and build better and more diversified resources within our community. Shared training opportunities have provided an excellent vehicle for this type of growth.

Groups Collaborating

- UDAC (a day training and habilitation program)
- Goodwill (a rehabilitation facility)
- Independent School District 709
- Duluth Technical College
- Pinewood (a day training and habilitation program)
- Community Living Project (a community-based program to assist people with serious and persistent mental illness)
- Division of Rehabilitation Services

Work Skills Day

6

St. Croix River Education District
425 South Dana Avenue, Rush City, MN 55069
Contact: Lori Erickson, Rush City High School, (612) 358-4795
Diane Menard and John Romportl,
Chisago Lakes High School, (612) 257-1130
Brenda Kaeding and Janelle McNally,
North Branch High School, (612) 674-5352

Overview

Work Skills Day is an event for high school students enrolled in the Occupational Skills Seminar and Work Experience programs for students with disabilities in Chisago or Pine County in Minnesota. Throughout the year, as the students are increasing their job-seeking skills in the seminar class, they are also preparing for the Work Skills Day events. On the event day, students from the two counties are competitively judged on their skills in the areas of job application form completion, job interviewing, and work situation problem solving. Awards are presented to the top five finalists in each event. Another area awarded is "sportsmanship". This award goes to the school team whose members participate maturely in the activities of the day.

The Need

The idea of Work Skills Day began as an innovative program sixteen years ago as a way to enable Work Experience students in Chisago County to use their job-related skills. Students needed practical application of the skills they were learning in the Occupational Skills Seminar. They needed to see the relevance of what they were learning, and how it would apply in the real world.

It also became apparent that as students with disabilities entered the labor force, employers and community members needed a better understanding of individuals with disabilities. It became important to strengthen community awareness regarding students' *abilities* rather than focusing on disabilities.

A third need is also becoming more apparent – the need to disseminate "transition" information to the studenrs. Students should be aware of various agencies and services that they may need after high school. As work coordinators, we were doing a good job of informing students about jobs and job training, and post-secondary education; however, the other three transition areas of community participation, recreation/leisure, and home living were not being addressed as effectively as desired.

Meeting the Need

Work Skills Day events focus on the skills the students learn in a seminar class. The competition is in the three main job-related areas of filling out application forms, interviewing, and problem solving. Work Skills Day expands the classroom instruction to a practical learning ex-

Participant Disabilities

- SLD, MMH, E/BD students who participate in the Vocational Work Experience program
- Alternative high school students

Ages Served

- 16 to 21

Areas of Collaboration

- Planning together to meet student's transitional needs
- Raising community awareness of the *abilities* of students with disabilities
- Disseminating Information

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Secondary Schools
- Training Centers
- School District
- Technical College
- CTICs
- DRS
- State Services for the Blind
- Local Community Employers

perience. Students practice their skills with actual employers from the community. It becomes a hands-on approach which reinforces job-related skills being taught in the classroom.

Local employers and adults service providers participate in Work Skills Day as judges of the events. On Work Skills Day, the judges receive an orientation to acquaint them with the events. The orientation also allows the judges to ask questions relevant to Work Skills Day. The experience of being involved in Work Skills Day as a judge increases employer and community awareness of students' abilities.

A transition booth is set up with information focusing on the five areas of transition. Pamphlets, hand-outs, brochures, and posters are set in this area so students can obtain information. Representatives from several agencies are present to answer students' questions. To encourage student participation, a questionnaire with a list of transitional items is given to each student. The students earn points toward the sportsmanship award by completing the questionnaire. Additionally, students who ask the professionals questions are eligible for door prizes.

While developing such an extensive and meaningful program for the students, the work coordinators required the cooperation of many others, including school administrators, community members, service agencies, parents, and employers.

Results

Work Skills Day success has become apparent in many ways. Judges and guests to the event have many positive comments, such as: "I didn't know what to expect from the students prior to Work Skills Day. I really didn't think the students would do so well", "I'd hire this student", and "Tell this student to come see me next week. I'd like to have them go through another interview with my company." Many of the judges ask to be considered again for the following year. Employers and other human service providers find the day to be worthwhile and are supportive of these efforts. Work Skills Day gives the local employers a better picture of what the students can do. It also opens up leads to future work sites for the Work Experience programs. Employers and community members who have been involved in Work Skills Day as judges or guests become more aware of students' abilities rather than their disabilities.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) placement specialist has commented that students who are enrolled in the Work Experience programs and take part in Work Skills Day have acquired job-seeking skills beyond the average client of DRS. Work Skills Day gives students the added boost they need when going out into the working world. Students feel more competent and confident when seeking their first job. Their job-seeking attitude and skills are greatly enhanced by participation in Work Skills Day.

The students also report that they benefit from the day. Many find the experience to be challenging, yet meaningful and rewarding. Students have come back to the Work Experience coordinators after graduating from high school to acknowledge how much the Work Experience program and Work Skills Day aided them. By practicing and applying their skills in a competitive event, they are better prepared for actual job-seeking situations.

Comments

Work Skills Day began sixteen years ago in Chisago County as Work Experience Competitive Day. Approximately twenty-five students and ten judges participated in the events. In 1992, Pine County schools and students joined in the day. The event moved to Pine Technical College, which provided a natural post-secondary setting with which the students became acquainted. The number of student participants rose to near sixty and included not only high school work experience students but also alternative high school students. The number of judges has grown to twenty-two. Exposure of the program has gone beyond the local county level. Other counties are currently developing and implementing Work Skills Day events modeled after the Chisago County program. Any schools or CTIC wishing technical assistance in developing a Work Skills Day program may

contact St. Croix River Education District or any Work Experience Coordinator listed above.

Groups Collaborating

- Rush City High School
- North Branch High School
- Chisago Lakes High School
- East Central High School
- Hinckley/Finlayson High School
- Pine Area Learning Center
- Willow River High School
- St. Croix River Education District
- Pine Technical College
- Chisago County CTIC
- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- State Services for the Blind
- Employment and Training Center
- Job Service
- Local community employers

7 Projects With Industry and Community Transition Interagency Committees – a Rural Partnership

Division of Rehabilitation Services
1577 E Highway 95, Cambridge, MN 55008
Contact: Laurie Larson, (612) 689-3250

Overview

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) applied for a Projects With Industry (PWI) Federal grant in 1987 to create a rural transition program for students with disabilities. DRS was awarded this grant serving three rural locations in Minnesota: the Mankato area, Cloquet/Grand Rapids/Brainerd, and the Cambridge area. At the same time, Rum River Special Education Cooperative was well on its way to establishing a "transition" focus within three counties: Mille Lacs, Isanti and Kanabec. The similar ideologies meshed together well, and we began the process of developing cooperative or collaborative transition networks.

The Need

The concept of "transition" in the late 1980s for students with disabilities involved many hours in planning and preparing to work together to understand each agency's offerings and when, where, how, and with whom a student or parents should become involved. The PWI grant brought in a well-needed component to transition, namely the business community (called the Business Advisory Council). Bringing together education, agencies and the business community for the common focus of students in transition – in rural areas – seemed like an overwhelming project. Within six years, the project idea is functioning much more efficiently than had been expected – and, clearly, changes and improvements are expected in the future. Most importantly, students with disabilities have access to an array of services and information in East Central Minnesota as never before.

Participant Disabilities

- All disabilities

Ages Served

- Isanti CTIC: 14 to 21
- PWI-BAC: 14 to 25

Areas of Collaboration

- Transition Services Training
- Employment Training
- Educational Opportunities/Needs
- Disability Awareness Training
- Direct Service Provisions
- Individualized Student Planning

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Family Services
- Regional Treatment Center
- High Schools
- Learning Centers
- DRS
- State Services for the Blind
- Business Advisors
- Mental Health Centers

Meeting the Need

Both the Rum River Special Education Cooperative CTIC and the Projects with Industry Business Advisory Council needed to make changes in their structures to achieve greater efficiency in dealing with transition objectives:

1. The Rum River Special Education Cooperative CTIC met quarterly and involved seventy to eighty participants. While such unity seemed logical at first, the size of the group reduced the effectiveness of the CTIC's efforts. Two years ago, Rum River split into three separate CTICs, by county. This change allowed each CTIC to specialize in transition services within a much smaller geographic area. Goals and objectives could be set and obtained, and the meetings became very action oriented.

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2 The Projects With Industry Business Advisory Council (BAC) met quarterly and grew to thirty-five members covering a five-county area. Again, this seemed logical at first, but revisions had to be made in order to facilitate attendance and cohesion. The BAC is now composed of representatives from education, rehabilitation services, and the private sector, and has been reduced in size from thirty-five to eighteen very active members. As a result, goals and objectives are much easier to establish and fulfill.

These two changes contributed to a more successful transition-service model. For example, Isanti County CTIC was able to create goals and objectives for two school districts rather than one committee trying to set goals and objectives for nine school districts. This allowed us to ensure that all students with disabilities needing transition services would be identified much earlier and plans put in place well before graduation from high school. While those plans change during and after graduation from high school or post-secondary education, at least the students/parents had improved access to localized service providers. In addition, Isanti CTIC has student and parent representation, work experience coordinators from both schools and agency representation.

Several BAC members are in education, a few are business persons and also parents of students with disabilities, and some are persons of leadership in business/industry from our five-county area. The purpose of the BAC is to give DRS-PWI staff direction, technical expertise and leadership in ways to include persons in transition within the labor force. This partnership has become highly cooperative, informative, and assistive in design. The BAC members provide mock interviews, act as judges at Work Skills competition, speak publicly about hiring individuals with disabilities (focus on abilities) to other organizations and community groups, give PWI staff job leads and labor market information, and help PWI staff organize and design disability awareness seminars (for all business people). The information the BAC provides is shared with CTICs and vice-versa.

Results

While operating separately, the Isanti CTIC and the DRS-PWI transition project have collectively accomplished a great deal for the benefit of students with disabilities over the past several years. The greatest benefit to all parties has been an increase in co-education – understanding what each service agency, business representative and educational facility can do to help students and/or their parents set plans for the future. Clearly, new gaps in services and issues of eligibility arise regularly, but the two groups are dedicated to addressing each – preferably on an individualized student basis. Cooperative development will continue, follow-up will be a priority and follow-along a necessity.

Comments

Issues we continually face in East Central Minnesota are Transportation and Affordable Housing. The Isanti CTIC and the DRS-PWI staff welcome suggestions from other rural CTICs in addressing these age-old issues.

Groups Collaborating

- Rum River Cooperative Administration
- Isanti County Family Services
- Westview High School, Braham
- Cambridge Regional Treatment Center
- Cambridge Senior High School
- St. Francis Schools, North

- Community Education
- Area Learning Center
- !ndustries, Inc. (a rehabilitation facility)
- State Services for the Blind
- Center for Independent Living
- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Business Advisory Council of PWI
- Five County Mental Health Center

Promoting Student Self-Advocacy through the Advisor/Advisee Process

8

Vector Program, Hennepin Technical College
9000 Brooklyn Boulevard, Brooklyn Park, MN 55445 *and*
9200 Flying Cloud Drive, Eden Prairie, MN 55347
Contact: Darla Jackson, (612) 550-2142

Overview

The Intermediate School District 287 Vector Program has adopted the Hennepin Technical College Student Advising System to assist students in developing meaningful plans and to empower them to accomplish their career or life goals. This system can be a powerful intervention to greatly improve the quality of the student's educational experience. The advisor meets weekly with students to assist in their decision-making process by helping to identify and assess alternatives and the consequences of decisions. Advising is an extension of the educational process and is highly dependent on developing a healthy relationship between advisor and advisee.

The Need

The Vector Program believes strongly in student self-determination. The program recognized that students needed to take ownership in their career and life plans and make the valuable links with interagency resources. However, students did not always have the skills or experience to accomplish these tasks.

Through the advising process, students develop tools to assist them in making meaningful decisions about all aspects of their lives, and to develop skills in making contacts with agencies, employers and the community at large. As a result, students make more informed decisions and their level of satisfaction with those decisions increases.

Meeting the Need

Recognizing the need to develop a system to teach these skills as well as to provide opportunities to use them, students and Vector staff reviewed Hennepin Technical College's model of student advising. Vector staff then adapted the system to accommodate the unique needs of students served in the Vector program. Adapting the system changed instructor titles to *advisor* and student titles to *advisee*.

A mutually agreed upon and clearly articulated system-wide philosophy and definition of advising is essential to success. Staff agreed that advising is a "developmental process which assist[s] students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process which assists students in realizing their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor. It is on-going, multifaceted and the responsibility of both student and advisor."

This definition of advising should not be confused with personal or psychological counseling.

Participant Disabilities

- All disabilities

Ages Served

- 18 to 21

Areas of Collaboration

- Information Sharing
- Planning for Students
- Interagency Training

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Public Schools/Districts
- DRS
- Social Services
- Advocacy Groups
- Mental Health Service Providers
- Employers
- Parents, Foster Parents, Guardians

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Once the definition of advising was adopted, advising goals were established. Examples of some these goals are:

- Assisting students in self-understanding and self-acceptance through values clarification and understanding abilities;
- Assisting students in their consideration of life goals by relating interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and the nature and purpose of their program at Vector;
- Assisting students in developing an educational plan consistent with life goals and objectives; *and*
- Assisting students in developing decision-making skills.

The role of the advisor and the responsibilities were identified and shared with the advisees. Advisor responsibilities include helping the advisee redefine and develop educational and career plans consistent with their abilities and interests. They also help to monitor progress toward educational and career goals. Additionally, advisors assist in administrative details such as interpreting and clarifying policies, procedures and requirements, scheduling times to meet, and maintaining an advising file for each student.

Advisee responsibilities were also developed. Some of these responsibilities include preparation for the advising session with appropriate transcripts, records or other resources; clarifying personal values, abilities, interests and goals; meeting with the advisor on a regular basis at a mutually agreed upon time; taking responsibility to contact and make an appointment with the advisor when in need of assistance; following through on actions identified during each advising session; and accepting final responsibility for all decisions.

It is important for advisor and advisee to realize that advisors can not make decisions for advisees. Good advising can help advisees maximize their ability to make their own decisions.

Advising sessions can be group or individual meetings. Agendas are established and distributed to advisors and students to be used as guidelines. Group meeting agendas may include student or staff responsibilities, introduction of a Personal Information Filing System (PTIMS – described in volume one of *Transition Strategies That Work*), and introduction to IEP conference preparation.

Individual meetings keep students focused on a weekly basis. Individual meeting agendas may include periodic organization of the Personal Information Filing System and other personal calendar or other organizational tools. Conference preparation can include:

- Reviewing assessments, including why the assessment was given and the results;
- Discussing the student's level of involvement and comfort when participating in their IEP Conference as well as class options;
- Discussing and setting suggested goals for the week and the school year;
- Ongoing reviewing of progress toward IEP goals and implementing and monitoring weekly objectives;
- Identifying specific new student information;
- Discussing the student's disability (strengths and limitations and how that impacts services from various service providers; *and*
- Identifying any personal goals the student may want to share.

Advisors were trained in the beginning of the school year and given a copy of the adapted Hennepin Technical College guidelines for effective student advising. Staff requested more training about listening and interviewing techniques as future inservice opportunities. A record keeping system was developed to record individual and group meeting notes. Each advisor and advisee signs the notes to ensure understanding and promote follow-through.

Results

Information assessment through observation by advisors, advisees, parents, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) counselors, county case managers, and other service providers indicate positive results. Advisees are better informed, more relaxed and willing to participate at a greater level of involvement in their program planning. Given the tools, several Vector students have successfully led their own IEP meeting.

Students feel empowered when they have the skills to make choices. The weekly meetings help keep the students focused on their goals. Students see the connections with their plan and understand who can assist them in meeting their goals.

Groups Collaborating

- District 287 Special Education Department and member school districts
- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Hennepin County Social Services
- District 287 Vocational Education
- Advocacy groups
- Mental health service providers
- Metropolitan Center for Independent Living
- Employers
- Parents, foster parents, guardians of students

9 Northwest and Metro CTIC Parent Connection and Recreation Discovery Program

Northwest Metro CTIC
c/o Robbinsdale Area Community Education
4139 Regent Avenue N, Robbinsdale, MN 55422
Contact: Mary Cordell, (612) 535-1790 x236

Overview

In 1990, the parent members of the Northwest Metro Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC) in Minnesota, established a sub-committee to their CTIC called the Parent Connection to serve as a forum for parents and others within the community to share information regarding transition issues and concerns.

During the 1992–93 school year, a component called "Recreation Discovery" was created as an adjunct to the Parent Connection meetings. It offers a sampling of community recreation programs for young adults with disabilities, while parents/care providers attend the Parent Connection.

The Need

There had been a history of limited parent and consumer involvement in the CTIC and a lack of awareness regarding transition issues by consumers and parents in the community. As a result, the CTIC set a goal of recruiting a minimum of four parents as members to the CTIC. These parent members formed a sub-committee to provide a forum for parent focus groups on transition issues.

The NW Hennepin Parent Connection has three main goals:

1 To provide a direct link between the CTIC and the parents/consumers.

2 To promote collaborative efforts between professionals and families in transition.

3 To advocate for consumer interests in transition issues.

Participant Disabilities

All disabilities •

Ages Served

14 to 25 •

Areas of Collaboration

Information Sharing •
Co-funding •
Sharing Staff •
Program Sharing •

Types of Groups Collaborating

CTICs •
Parks and Recreation •
Recreation Staff and Planning •
Community Education •

Meeting the Need

The NW Metro CTIC Parent Connection, in collaboration with the other CTIC members, took the following steps to meet the needs of parents and student consumers:

- The CTIC developed an orientation procedure for new CTIC members, including a history sheet, brochure, and membership directory. This information was provided in an informal meeting to welcome new parent members and prepare them for regular CTIC meetings.
- Five focus groups of parents/consumers were established to address the five domains of transition: home living, community participation, recreation and leisure, post-secondary training, and vocational options. Using the nominal group method, information was gathered, prioritized, and returned to the CTIC for discussion.
- The Parent Connection developed an informal survey to disseminate at monthly Parent Connection meetings to gather additional

information on the needs and concerns of consumers in transition.

- The Parent Connection began holding monthly meetings. These meetings were developed to begin addressing the concerns identified by the five focus groups. At least of two professionals from the CTIC attended each meeting to share their expertise and to learn from the parents.
- The parents began collecting information for the Parent Connection directory, in collaboration with the Vector Program in Intermediate District 287 and other participants at the monthly Parent Connection meetings.
- The parents began doing site visits to agencies in their area providing transition services. The purpose of these visits was to gather information from these agencies and service providers to then share with the other parents in the community.

Results

The Parent Connection is now in its second year. At this time, the group meets once a month prior to the regular CTIC meeting to continue sharing information and educating others on transition needs and concerns. Over the past two years, representation at the Parent Connection meetings has been diverse and has expanded to include not only parents, but also service providers, educators and others interested in the transition process. The Parent Connection has developed a yearly calendar of meeting topics, along with providing guest speakers related to each topic.

The Recreation Discovery Program is a new component which was developed collaboratively by the NW Metro CTIC, local recreation departments, YMCA, Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, and other community agencies. The purpose is to provide parents attending the Parent Connection with respite support, enabling them to attend the meetings on a regular basis; and to provide an integrated recreational and social opportunity for young adults with disabilities to expand recreational options in the community. The NW Metro Parent Connection now holds their meetings at the YMCA in order to provide for the community recreation component.

Another result of the Parent Connection meetings has been to establish a relationship with Windows of Opportunity, which is part of Robbinsdale Community Education. Windows of Opportunity provides clerical and distribution support for CTIC and Parent Connection materials.

Comments

The Parent Connection has several goals they hope to accomplish in the future:

1 To develop an infrastructure within the school system to improve communication between the parent/student consumers of transition services and the educators, administrators and professionals providing these services.

2 To develop a lending library of materials gathered from agencies related to transition.

3 To develop a parent handbook on the transition process.

Groups Collaborating

- NW Metro CTIC
- NW Metro Parent Connection
- Maple Grove Park and Recreation
- West Hennepin Community Services (recreation staff & planning)
- Metropolitan Center for Independent Living
- Windows of Opportunity (Robbinsdale Community Education)

10 *Voices for Disability Rights*

918 3rd Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413
Contact: Rod & Sandy Morgan, (612) 378-7649

Overview

Voices for Disability Rights is a political action committee (PAC). Becoming a PAC gave the organization greater flexibility in its activities than it had as a non-profit organization. Its mission is to strengthen and support the political involvement of consumers interested in disability issues. Through political action, consumers learn self-advocacy skills they can use in every aspect of life.

The Need

Because decision- and policy-makers have such a great impact on the lives of persons with disabilities, individuals need to understand the political process and advocate for themselves. Young adults need to gain experience expressing their needs and desires. The experience gained through working with legislators and other policy-makers can increase the skills and confidence necessary for youth in transition to take control over their lives. Voices for Disability Rights grew out of discussions between individuals and various disability organizations to address the political needs of persons with disabilities.

Meeting the Need

The skills required for effective self-advocacy in political action include a working knowledge of the political process and the ability to communicate with community leaders. Voices for Disability Rights uses a three-pronged approach to meet the needs of its members. The first is to educate of its members about the political process. The second is to educate the legislators about disability issues. Members are encouraged to develop a working relationship with their legislators and to effectively communicate with them. As a result, individuals learn that it is not necessary to depend and rely on a lobbyist or other spokesperson to represent their views. The third approach is to endorse candidates and actively work toward their election. Members are expected to vote, to attend their caucus, and to work on their chosen candidates' campaigns.

Monthly meetings keep members abreast of disability issues. A speaker at each meeting provides information and/or inspiration. Speaker may be lobbyists, representatives from a special interest groups, politicians, or community leaders.

A monthly newsletter is also published for members who cannot attend the meetings. Members submit editorials and articles expressing their ideas and opinions. Committees work on various issues concerning the organization and on legislation affecting the lives of persons with disabilities.

Participant Disabilities
- All disabilities

Ages Served
- 14 and older

Areas of Collaboration
- Advocacy
- Training

Types of Groups Collaborating
- Metropolitan Center for Independent Living
- Independence Crossroads
- Disability Rights Alliance
- Help Yourself
- Telecommunications Access Board

There is a widespread interest in the activities of this organization. Recognition of the importance of self-advocacy skills for persons with disabilities and of understanding the political process sparked an interest from other groups to co-sponsor a training program. A three-part series, titled *Government Inaction or Government In Action: the Choice is Yours*, was developed through the collaborative effort of Voices for Disability Rights, the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, Independence Crossroads, and the Disability Rights Alliance. These groups are community-based organizations working to assist persons with disabilities to gain their independence and experience total community integration.

Results

The most notable and positive result has been an increased faith in the electoral process. Individuals now believe that they do have a voice and that their views will be heard. Participants realize through the activities of the organization that if they do not take control of their lives, someone else will.

Voices for Disability Rights has seen strong, assertive individuals emerge from its initially quiet, passive membership. Once afraid to complain and object out of fear of losing services and offending others, individuals are now taking the initiative to get things done: they have recognized their ability to take control. People from the community, in return, have responded positively. Legislators have sought the advice of their constituents who belong to Voices for Disability Rights on issues that will affect the lives of people with disabilities.

Comments

This organization can easily expand, establishing branches throughout Minnesota. By instilling an interest in the political process early, youth can gain an increased understanding of their surrounding community. Schools could easily include this type of training in their curriculum.

Groups Collaborating

- Voices for Disability Rights
- Metropolitan Center for Independent Living
- Independence Crossroads
- Disability Rights Alliance
- Help Yourself
- PACIP Board (a telecommunications access board)

11 Consumer Conference: Secrets to Our Success

Kandiyohi County ARC, Little Crow CTIC, Little Crow Special Education Cooperative, and Kandiyohi County Mental Health Association
500 19th Avenue SE, Willmar, MN 56201
Contact: Wendy Nelson, (612) 231-1100

Overview

The Kandiyohi County ARC, Little Crow Community Transition Interagency Committee, Little Crow Special Education Cooperative, and Kandiyohi County Mental Health Association sponsor a yearly consumer conference called "Secrets to Our Success". The conference is for consumers, primarily persons of transition age or older with developmental disabilities. The conference has also been attended by persons with mental illness.

The Need

The Little Crow CTIC saw the need for consumers with developmental disabilities to attend a conference to increase awareness in community participation. The CTIC acknowledges that consumers need opportunities to expand understanding of themselves as integral members of their communities. A conference would allow them to choose workshop sessions based on personal interests.

Meeting the Need

The Consumer Conference coordinator is the Kandiyohi County/Willmar Public Schools Transition Coordinator. The other committee members are from a variety of agencies, including a parent (also ARC president), two semi-independent living/supported living services (SILS/SLS) directors, a rehabilitation facility case manager, director of a special education cooperative, and a representative from the mental health association. The committee utilizes funding from the Little Crow Special Education Cooperative CSPD (Comprehensive System of Personnel Development) allocations, CTIC grant money, and Kandiyohi County ARC monies. The facility for the event is an entertainment center in Willmar, which has numerous rooms and serves the noon meal. Volunteers include county social services, parents, school staff, adult service agencies, ARC, and consumers. The planning committee determines the general focus of the conference and arranges workshops which are typically centered around topics like individual empowerment, making choices, relationships, being active in the community, health and safety issues, and leisure activities. St. Paul's CLIMB theater group uses humorous and informative drama to reinforce these topics.

Participant Disabilities

- Mild to severe developmental disabilities
- Persons with mental illness

Ages Served

- 14 and older

Areas of Collaboration

- Planning
- Volunteer work at conference
- Funding

Types of Groups Collaborating

- ARCs
- Community Transition Interagency Committee
- Special Education Cooperative
- Mental Health Association

Results

Approximately one hundred fifty consumers attend the conference. A variety of presentation techniques such as videotapes, hands-on activities, discussion, humor, community leaders, and music are effective

as seen by the consumers' enthusiasm. In addition to attending the workshops, the attendees also like socializing and having lunch with one another. The workshop presenters enjoy sharing their interests and connecting with the consumers in a positive way.

Comments

It is essential that the focus of the conference be centered on the needs and interests of consumers: this is *their* day! The planning team and volunteers benefit from the rewards of working together in interagency collaboration.

Groups Collaborating

- Kandiyohi County ARC
- Little Crow Community Transition Interagency Committee
- Little Crow Special Education Cooperative
- Kandiyohi County Mental Health Association

12 *Leadership for Empowerment (LEP)*

Ridgedale YMCA
12301 Ridgedale Drive, Minnetonka, MN 55305
Contact: Kathy Truax, (612) 544-7708

Overview

Leadership for Empowerment is based on a partnership between a middle school and a YMCA or other local community agency. In an effort to promote inclusion, the youth involved in LEP individuals with and without disabilities. After a program site is established, the school determines the most appropriate program format, whether it be after school or during the school day itself. In addition, the school recruits a balanced ratio of youth to enhance possible friendship building among individuals with and without disabilities. The community agency proceeds with programming, which includes youth providing service to the community in a variety of options (i.e., benefiting the community environmentally, creatively, educationally, etc.). Youth are then referred to other existing programs as they graduate into high school. The program is flexible and capable of being adjusted to meet the needs of the collaborating agencies. The Ridgedale YMCA acts as the liaison between partnerships, intervening when any specific problems arise.

The Need

Recognizing that socialization and self-determination skills are key factors in the successful development of any youth, the need to offer youth with developmental disabilities the same opportunities to achieve such skills as youth without disabilities is significant. Research shows that individuals are more sensitive to diversity the younger they are exposed to it. While a large percentage of inclusive programming is currently being offered on the high school level, little is available for junior high youth or younger. The LEP program is an effort to plant the seeds of awareness and sensitivity towards youth of all abilities in junior high school for successful inclusion in high school. This program targets middle school aged youth to experience diversity in a non-threatening environment. In addition, by strengthening programming by using two separate community agencies, youth are inadvertently exposed to a variety of community opportunities and the larger impact of team effort. Thus all youth, regardless of differences in ability, are empowered to become fully contributing members in the social, economic, political, and spiritual life of their community.

Participant Disabilities

- Youth with developmental disabilities and peers without disabilities

Ages Served

- 12 to 14

Areas of Collaboration

- Shared Programs
- Shared Staffing
- Information Sharing
- Recruitment Efforts
- Model Development

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Area YMCAs
- Middle Schools

Meeting the Need

Through funding from the Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Ridgedale YMCA began implementation of LEP in an effort to achieve the following goals:

- **Inclusion:** LEP supports inclusion by recruiting youth both with and without disabilities to participate in a semester-long program.

- **Integrated Friendships:** By balancing the ratio, youth have more of an opportunity to develop a friendship with at least one other youth whom they might otherwise have never met.
- **Empowerment:** By keeping the program structure flexible, youth are given a variety of opportunities to make decisions together.
- **Community Service:** The culmination of the program includes providing a service for the community. Services have included, but are not limited to, performing a play for a Nursing Home, Hospital, or other local human needs agency; participating in community clean-ups; volunteering for various community events; supporting low-income families with holiday food drives, care packages, and other family needs.
- **Transition Steps:** LEP lays the foundation for self-determination and leadership skills. Youth in the program are recruited to participate in a variety of existing leadership conferences that include high-school aged youth such as Youth in Government, an annual mock government experience for eighth through twelfth grade, held at the State Capitol. In addition, adult conferences to develop leadership skills have been adapted and geared toward middle school aged youth. The annual Key Leaders Conference, for example, typically offered to YMCA employees, invited youth for the first time to participate in a parallel conference meeting leadership issues on the youth level. Also, youth who have graduated on to high school often maintain a connection with LEP by continuing to assist in program implementation. Finally, LEP refers youth to become a part of other programs available for youth in high school.

Results

The connections between youth with and without disabilities are a measure of LEP's success rate. Examples, such as that of a usually isolated youth who became more assertive and outgoing during a conference or new acquaintances who spend the entire conference together, acknowledge LEP's success. In addition, with the program doubling its size in its second year, professionals can easily see the immediate impact of the program and its positive effects on agencies and youth alike.

Comments

The crucial element in replicating this program is a willingness for two community-based agencies to develop a partnership together. Proper funding would ideally provide a single overseeing agency to act as the liaison between the collaborating organizations. Together, the partnership sites would be responsible for sharing the necessary resources to fuel the program.

Groups Collaborating

- Albert Lea Family YMCA/Albert Lea Middle School
- Itasca County Family YMCA/Grand Rapids Junior High
- Minneapolis Ridgedale Branch YMCA/Minnetonka Junior High
- Anwatin Middle School
- Moorhead Community Education Moorhead Junior High
- Minneapolis Northeast Branch YMCA/Northeast Junior High
- Minneapolis Southdale Branch YMCA/Central Middle School

13 An Urban Response to Transition

Transition Plus Services, St. Paul Public Schools
251 Starkey Street, Suite 128, St. Paul, MN 55107
Contact: Liz Cole, (612) 293-5420
and
Life Skills Transition Project, Minneapolis Public Schools
University of St. Thomas
1000 La Salle Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55403
Contact: Si Lane, (612) 627-2436

Overview

The St. Paul and Minneapolis school districts have developed similar programs serving students aged eighteen to twenty-one who have learning disabilities, mild developmental disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disorders in community-based settings. Each program is available to special education students who have reached age eighteen but have not achieved the transition goals and objectives on their IEP. Transition training occurs under the direction of licensed educational staff. Transition staff work in partnership with key community agencies to assure positive experiences and to improve important connections with adult service providers.

Participant Disabilities

- Learning disabilities
- Mild developmental disabilities
- Mild E/BD
- Visual, hearing and/or physical impairments

Ages Served

- 18 to 21

Areas of Collaboration

- Information Sharing
- Co-funding
- Joint Planning
- Assessment Sharing
- Shared Community Sites
- Shared Staff

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Public Schools
- DRS
- YMCA
- Rehabilitation Facilities
- Technical Colleges

The Need

Students who have reached age eighteen typically want to graduate with their peers in high school, however the students in these two programs were not prepared for independent adult life. They required more time to learn job skills, independent living skills, recreation skills, community skills, and needed support at post-secondary institutions. Many of these students did not recognize the need for skills needed to function independently as adults while they were still in high school. Some students need the flexibility of time and realistic life experiences to be able to begin to address their individual needs. Both districts recognized that many of these students would have become drop-outs, homeless, underemployed, unemployed, or unprepared if they did not receive additional supports and services.

Meeting the Need

A location that is easily accessible to students and their families while not perceived as a "school" allows for a process of learning life skills that cannot always be met in a typical high school setting. Some of the ways student needs are being met in both of these programs are:

- Student and staff schedules are flexible. Education and learning occur throughout the day and often into the evening to accommodate the individual needs of students. Some students may need time to deal with personal issues and may "opt-out" for a period of time, until they are ready to re-connect with the program and services.

- Students recognize and acknowledge their need for further support and involvement in learning the skills necessary for adult life. They choose to walk through graduation ceremonies with their graduation class, however are willing have their diplomas withheld until achieving transition goals and objectives.
- Students receive highly individualized programming and services to meet their needs. Most of these students with disabilities have other barriers to successful community living, such as economic disadvantages, unstable living arrangements, poor health care, and being single parents. Staff develop a plan and strategies to connect students with the appropriate agencies available to ensure their needs are met.
- A transition team with diverse backgrounds and specialities that work together to coordinate efficient services for the student. The team's nurturing and caring style encourages and supports students and their families during the process of transition to independence. The team guides students and families through identifying and accessing community resources.
- Students receive training in home living, community involvement, jobs and job training, recreation and leisure and post-secondary learning opportunities. The focus of the training is on accessing community resources relevant to each of these transition areas.

Results

Success is determined by the achievement of transition goals and objectives as addressed in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). By providing students with the opportunity to continue their education through these programs they have been able to develop and practice skills that will help them become productive citizens rather than the recipients of community support. Students learn to access community resources on their own, and develop interpersonal and self-advocacy skills for positive interaction with family, peers, and employers.

An additional benefit of these transition efforts has been the cooperation and collaboration of agencies and resources in the Twin Cities area. The Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) support both of these transition programs and provide useful information, guidance and a network of services which can be utilized. The linkages provided to these students are more varied and comprehensive than those typically provided by high schools.

To date St. Paul has been operational for four years. When the efforts first began, the program started with eleven students and has steadily grown to ninety-five this year. Of the total student enrollment for the four years, twenty-five students have successfully completed their program and received their diploma. The Minneapolis program is in its second year of operation. Seventeen students are enrolled, and five have successfully graduated. Follow-up information on students will be collected in both districts.

Groups Collaborating

- Wilder Foundation/St. Paul Schools
- University of St. Thomas/Minneapolis Schools
- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- County Social Services
- YMCA
- St. Paul Rehabilitation Center (a rehabilitation facility)
- Technical Colleges
- Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL)

14 On Our Own

Albany Senior High
Box 330, Albany, MN 56307
Contact: Barb Fischer and Jana Hennen-Burr, (612) 845-2171
FAX: 845-4017

Overview

The On Our Own program is a community-based independent living skills program for students with disabilities. The students in the program must be eighteen to twenty-one years old or no more than two years from graduation. The students live in an apartment and work in the community. There are three three-month sessions per school year. Students attend the On Our Own program for one of the sessions. On Our Own is offered as a program in the Albany area schools, however it services many students from the surrounding rural districts.

The Need

The senior high special education teachers found that when students with disabilities were taught independent living skills (check writing, cooking, etc.) in simulated environments, most of their learning did not transfer into the natural setting. We also believe it is a natural progression for students with disabilities to learn and interact in the community with their peers.

Participant Disabilities

All levels •

Ages Served

18 to 21, or no more than two years from graduation •

Areas of Collaboration

Sharing Staff •
Co-funding •
Joint Transition Planning •
Assessment Sharing •
Information Sharing •

Types of Groups Collaborating

Center for Independent Living •
Social Services •
DRS •
Community Education •
Employment & Training Council •
CTICs •

Meeting the Need

On Our Own helps students access options available in all areas of transition. Some of the goals students may work on include:

- **Home Living:** budgeting; independent living skills such as cooking, laundry, and grocery shopping; getting along with roommates.
- **Recreation and Leisure:** planning recreation activities, making age-appropriate choices of what to do in their free time, and involvement in Community Education classes.
- **Community Participation:** voting, agency identification, mobility training, and accessing the community's businesses.
- **Jobs and Job Training:** job-seeking skills, learn job tasks and routines, use of time clock and time-card, social skills on the job, appropriate grooming, and banking skills.
- **Post-secondary Education:** observe technical colleges, develop a plan with adult service organizations for post-graduation and research post-secondary options.

Results

Currently in its second full year of operation, On Our Own has grown from a grant-funded, three-month pilot project in the spring

of 1992 to a program operating the entire district-funded school year. The program has become evaluative in nature. It provides adult service agencies, parents, and schools with valuable information regarding a student's potential for independent living.

Comments

On Our Own is a transition within a transition program. Parents have appreciated the opportunity to "gradually" adjust as their son or daughter leaves home, often for the first time. Some participants have learned they are not ready to leave home while others graduate and move directly from On Our Own into Adult Agency sponsored community living. Teaching in the program has given great insight into the importance of functional community-based instruction throughout the school's curriculum.

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Central Minnesota Center for Independent Living
- Stearns County Social Services
- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Community Education
- Stearns-Benton Employment and Training Council
- Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC)

15 *Student Transition Interagency Referral (STIR) Team*

Mankato District Schools
Contact: Michael Stewart, District 77 Schools, 1000 Broad Street N, Mankato, MN 56001, (507) 387-1818

Overview

The Student Transition Interagency Referral (STIR) Team is a subcommittee of the Mankato area CTIC and has sixteen to twenty members, including representatives from community agencies, special education, work coordinators, parents, and students. It serves as a referral body to promote transition planning for students receiving special education services in the Mankato area. Students may be referred by their school case manager at any time during their transition school years. Repeat referrals are also encouraged, based upon need.

The Need

The Mankato Area CTIC recognized that organized and appropriate transition planning and community agency referral was not occurring consistently in the Mankato area. As a result, the Mankato Area CTIC developed this subcommittee to bring students, parents, and school case managers in direct contact with community agencies to improve transition planning. An additional need was to increase student, parent, and teacher participation in the transition planning process.

Participant Disabilities

- All disabilities

Ages Served

- 14 to 21

Areas of Collaboration

- Information Sharing
- Co-funding
- Staff Sharing
- Joint Transition Planning
- Program Sharing
- Assessment Sharing

Types of Groups Collaborating

- DRS
- MRCI
- Department of Public Health
- Human Services
- Residential Programs
- Transition Programs
- Independent Living Centers
- Technical Colleges
- Social Security Administration
- ECSU

Meeting the Need

The STIR Team is made up of representatives from vocational rehabilitation, schools, county social services, JTPA, Center for Independent Living, post-secondary education and community providers.

The STIR Team has developed the following products and strategies to improve transition planning:

- Development of a Release of Information form.
- Development of a Student Profile form which addresses each of the five areas of transition on the IEP.
- Development of an Exit Plan form which contains the recommendations of the STIR Team; this form is sent to student, parents, referring teacher, and involved agencies.
- Securing the services of a substitute teacher to allow the referring school case manager to participate.
- Opening remarks by the chair to reduce the anxiety level of students and parents (e.g., "All these people are here to help you make good transition planning a part of your high school program").

- Encouraging the student to become an active self-advocate and accept the major role in transition planning.
- Espousing the theory that transition planning is an ongoing, vibrant, and positive experience for the student.

The STIR Team usually meets monthly and hears two student referrals each meeting, but the team will meet more often or for a longer duration if necessary to address the needs of students.

Results

The benefits of the STIR Team process have been multiple and entirely positive. They include:

- Community agencies meet and learn about the students they will serve, as well as provide information to students and parents regarding available services.
- Team transition planning produces excellent results.
- Students begin to take an active role in the transition planning process, become self-advocates, and feel empowered regarding their futures.
- Parents are comforted by the knowledge that transition planning assistance exists in their community and that there is "life after high school."
- Special educators embrace the concept of transition planning and the idea that the boundaries of their classroom go well beyond the four walls.
- Many other benefits and positive experiences emanate from interagency collaboration, such as mutual professional respect, increased awareness of available resources and programs, and consistent delivery of appropriate resources to meet student needs are developed.

Comments

This student-driven STIR Team process has fostered the spirit of collaboration in the Mankato Area, as well as positively publicizing the need for and existence of transition planning. Students and parents who will become involved in this process are briefed by teachers before the meeting takes place; they are given names and telephone numbers of other students and parents who have participated in this process in an effort to help them feel more comfortable.

Groups Collaborating

- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- MRCI-Mankato
- Minnesota Valley Action Council (JTPA)
- Department of Public Health
- Blue Earth County Human Services
- Nicollet County Human Services
- Prairie River Personal Care Associates
- Harry Meyering Center (a residential program)
- Maple River School Transition Program
- Mankato Schools Transition Office and Work Experience Program

- Projects with Industry (DRS)
- Independent Living Center (SMILES)
- South Central Technical College
- Social Security Administration
- Access Program – District 77 Community Education
- South Central ECSU

Transition from School to Community Living Program

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Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living
1306 7th Street NW, Rochester, MN 55069
Contact: Julia Springsted, (507) 285-1815

Overview

The Transition from School to Community Living Program is a service of Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL). The program assists youth with disabilities, ages fourteen to twenty-five, with the transition from school to community living. The purpose of the program is to ensure that youth with disabilities are aware of available resources and learn appropriate living skills to achieve maximum independence in the community. Through positive lifestyle planning with the student, teacher, parents, and other service providers, the program assists youth in achieving independence. Short- and long-range goals are established to enable individuals an opportunity for personal growth by making their own choices.

The Need

The Transition Program began in 1986 with a federal grant. It provided independent living skills training to young adults with disabilities. SEMCIL saw a need to begin community skills training prior to high school graduation for a smoother transition into the community and adult life. The program can also continue to provide services after high school graduation. The program has grown steadily since 1986 and now provides a variety of service options.

Meeting the Need

Service delivery in the Transition Program is individualized, using one or all of the following options:

- **Individual Independent Living Skills Training:** Young adults can receive skills training within the school, home or community. Individual sessions are designed to meet the specific needs and goals of the participant. The focus is on independent living skills. The Transition Program has developed its own curriculum consisting of the following units: socialization, health care, housing, homemaking, transportation, financial management, cooking, sexuality, community resources, employment and education options, recreation and leisure, safety, advocacy, and disability awareness.
- **Group Skills Training:** Transition staff can assist with independent living skills training to small groups of students, usually within the classroom on a regular basis. Transition staff also provide one-time workshops or a workshop series to small groups of students focusing on a variety of independent living areas.
- **Independent Living Skills Assessments:** A comprehensive, hands-

Participant Disabilities

- All disabilities

Ages Served

- 14 to 25

Areas of Collaboration

- Program Sharing
- Program Development
- Interagency Training
- Cost Sharing

Types of Groups Collaborating

- DRS
- County Social Services
- Public Schools
- Rehabilitation Facilities
- Private Industry Council

on independent living skills assessment, using both an apartment setting and sites within the community, is also available. Students are assessed over a three-day period in areas such as: meal planning and preparation, grocery shopping, financial management, socialization, housekeeping, laundry, transportation, and personal care and hygiene. The assessment can be used to develop transition goals on a student's IEP and to plan for the remaining high school years.

- **Teacher Support and Assistance:** Services to teachers may include curriculum development, staff workshops on transition, participation on CTICs, attendance at IEP meetings, identifying and writing transition goals, and acting as a link to adult service providers.
- **Social/Recreation Group:** SEMCIL also sponsors a social/recreation group consisting of approximately thirty consumers. Consumers are responsible for planning local as well as out-of-town leisure activities. Transition staff are available to assist consumers, write memos, do mailings, coordinate transportation, work out finances, and coordinate any other necessary services. A planning meeting is held once per month, and there is generally one activity held each month as well. Examples of activities include bowling, dances, and going to Twins games.

Results

The Transition Program addresses all the needs of youth with disabilities in a holistic manner. The Transition Program creates flexibility for service options, creativity, and an opportunity for increased independence through independent living skills training. The Transition Program is staffed by a Transition Services Coordinator and a Transition Specialist. The Program serves thirty-five to forty consumers from Rochester and also serves consumers through outreach offices in southeastern Minnesota.

Comments

The Transition Program works closely with school districts, social services, Division of Rehabilitation Services, supported employment and sheltered employment agencies. The transition staff collaborate closely with special education teachers to provide quality services to the students. The transition program seeks to enhance and supplement areas of transition based on student need. Quality of service is ensured through weekly or monthly consultations with the teacher, team teaching, and communication with parents. Collaboration is a critical component of the assessment process. The results of the assessment are shared at a team meeting and used to develop a comprehensive transition plan for the remaining high school years. The Transition Program also provides a link to other agencies that might assist the student. Referrals and consultations are made with social services, DRS, and/or supported and sheltered employment agencies. Transition staff serve on five CTICs throughout the region and actively participate in transition planning.

Groups Collaborating

- Division of Rehabilitative Services
- County Social Services
- Schools
- ABC (a rehabilitation facility)
- Private Industry Council

Project APT – Appropriate Planning for Transition

17

Specialized Transition and Employment Planning Services
(S.T.E.P.S.)
709 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104
Contact: Dennis Jensen, (612) 293-8996

Overview

Project APT – Appropriate Planning for Transition – is a St. Paul CTIC-sponsored program and is the result of collaborative action by Ramsey County Human Services, St. Paul Public Schools, and St. Paul Parks and Recreation. It also includes the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living and Community Education. It provides students with an opportunity to live for up to two weeks in an apartment with support to learn independent living skills.

The Need

Students with mild to severe developmental disabilities have difficulty transferring independent living skills to their "real world" living situations. They also rarely have the opportunity to experience any level of independence in living on their own to test their ability to live independently. Project APT was designed to provide students with developmental disabilities an opportunity to experience living on their own in an environment with structure and support by the participating agencies.

Meeting the Need

Project APT is a comprehensive independent living program in which the collaborating agencies each provide staff and/or resources to enable students to experience apartment living away from their home setting. Ramsey County Human Services provides a foster care setting and staff for evenings and weekends. St. Paul Public Schools provides staff and activities during the mornings and early afternoons. St. Paul Parks and Recreation and Community Education provide services during the late afternoons. The Metropolitan Center for Independent Living sponsors an activity one evening a week.

Project APT is the result of collaborative planning sponsored by the St. Paul CTIC, which includes agencies participating in Project APT and others. It represents the commitment of agencies to work together to plan, fund and share responsibility for a unique independent living opportunity for students with developmental disabilities in St. Paul.

Results

Project APT is a valuable experience for students and their families. It enables students to test their capability for independent living and provides families with an opportunity to view the student as an adult living in the "real world." One student moved out of his family home as

Participant Disabilities

- Developmental disabilities

Ages Served

- 16 to 22

Areas of Collaboration

- Information Sharing
- Joint Planning
- Cost Sharing

Types of Groups Collaborating

- CTICs
- Public Schools
- Human Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Community Education
- Independent Living Centers

a result of Project APT, and another has expressed the desire to do so.

Comments

Project APT teaches participants important independent living skills, but also builds students' self-esteem. It provides students with an opportunity to experience living on their own in a setting which provides a "safety net" of support.

Groups Collaborating

- St. Paul CTIC
- St. Paul Schools
- Ramsey County Human Services
- St. Paul Parks and Recreation
- Community Education
- Metropolitan Center for Independent Living

Occupational Skills Program

18

Brainerd Staples Technical College, Brainerd Campus
300 Quince Street, Brainerd, MN 56401
Contact: John Wallin or Karl Samp, (218) 828-5355 or
(800) 247-2574

Overview

The Occupational Skills Program is a one-year, individualized occupational education program which supports adults with disabilities in receiving a technical college diploma. The program provides occupational skill training in the least restrictive environment and enables graduates to achieve one or more of the following goals:

- To obtain competitive employment.
- To live independently.
- To seek additional education.

The Need

Many young people with mild disabilities do not qualify for ongoing support services through the counties and other agencies, yet are unable to compete in the work force and live independently without additional training after they leave school. This is especially true for young adults coming from small, rural school districts with limited options for work experience and independent living skill training.

Other young adults who do qualify for ongoing public support services may not need that level of support for an extended period of time. After a year of occupational and independent living skill training, they have the skills to work competitively and live independently.

Based upon the number of inquiries and enrollees the program has had in the past two years, a large number of young adults who can benefit from a year of post-secondary education and training.

Meeting the Need

By providing equal access for adults with disabilities to the technical colleges, the Occupational Skills Program (OSP):

- Helps students make appropriate career choices.
- Provides supplemental services as needed.
- Assists in the transition of students with disabilities from secondary special education to post-secondary technical education.
- Reduces the dependency of individuals with disabilities.
- Prepares individuals with disabilities for optimum adult participation in society.

Participant Disabilities

- **Mild/moderate developmental disabilities**
- **Severe learning disabilities**
- **Traumatic Brain Injury**
- **Tourette Syndrome**
- **Other secondary disabilities or related conditions**

Ages Served

- **18 and older**

Areas of Collaboration

- **Transition Planning**
- **Career Awareness Planning**
- **Vocational Training**
- **Independent Living Skills**
- **Community participation**

Types of Groups Collaborating

- **Technical Colleges**
- **DRS**
- **Social Services**
- **Independent Living Centers**
- **School Districts**
- **Businesses and Community Organizations**
- **Community Education**

The OSP helps students gain occupational experience and training by developing partnerships with community organizations and businesses with which students can receive hands-on training, or by having the students enroll in technical college courses in an area of interest. They are provided with support services and accommodations to increase their opportunities for learning and success.

Independent living skills are taught in a series of settings, including the apartments in which they live. Community participation is addressed through Service Learning, a method of teaching/learning that connects community service with academic learning. Students receive credit in Service Learning experiences. Job placement is done in close collaboration with DRS staff.

OSP is currently staffed with three full-time licensed faculty who do classroom instruction, case management, coordinate training activities, and are academic advisors. There are two part-time paraprofessional staff who provide job training, technical and academic tutoring, and transportation to job training sites. Student/peer tutors are also used through work study or in support services to supplement the technical tutoring.

Each student has an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) which is written twice a year: first by their case manager for the transition into the OSP, and rewritten in the spring, to a large degree, by the student at the end of the class on Self-Advocacy/Decision Making, for their transition out of OSP and into employment and independent living. They also have an Individual Technical Education Plan (ITEP) developed in the fall from the ITP to lay out the training and education plan for the students' year in OSP, identifying outcomes, support services and accommodations.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) documentation must be completed by the student's team before enrolling in the program, indicating that the student could not successfully complete a traditional technical college program.

Results

There are approximately thirty OSP students enrolled each year. Most have received a high school diploma. However, several attend under a high school contract for services after participation in graduation ceremonies with their classmates, and remain on an IEP for one or more years.

Students complete at least forty-eight credits, and successfully complete a six-credit, two hundred sixteen-hour internship in which they demonstrate the skills necessary to maintain employment. This is often in the job in which they will remain after the completion of the required internship and graduation from the program.

Job placement records show a ninety percent placement rate for graduates in the second year after program completion. Most are also living independently in the community, or with some support through semi-independent living services (SILS) or Centers for Independent Living.

OSP provides some services to high schools through contracts for services in conjunction with DRS. They also work closely with county social services in obtaining SILS services for students and with the Central Minnesota Center for Independent Living. Similar programs are part of the technical colleges at Willmar, Pine City and Bemidji.

Comments

The Occupational Skills Program in Brainerd was recognized as a 1993 Minnesota Exemplary Youth Service Program for the Service Learning component of the program. There are also OSPs at Willmar and Pine Technical Colleges.

Groups Collaborating

- Brainerd Staples Technical College
- Division of Rehabilitation Services

- Social Services
- Center for Independent Living
- Various School Districts
- Businesses/Community Organizations
- Community Education

19 *Summer Transition Program*

MetroSPLISE Vision Team
c/o Intermediate District 287/Hennepin Technical College
1820 Xenium Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441
Contact: Sally Endris, (612) 550-7162

Overview

Students are housed on the campus of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul for the three-week Summer Transition Program (STP). STP provides students who are blind or visually impaired with the opportunity to learn life skills which are difficult to provide during the school year. Some of these skills are daily living skills, money management, job-seeking skills, post-secondary training, and travel skills. This program also provides actual employment situations for each student in a variety of settings at job sites located throughout the metro area. Other areas which are incorporated into the program are social issues pertaining to visual impairment, recreation and leisure activities, and exposure to assistive technology. Student participation requires approval of the parents and referral by the local school district the student attends during the regular school year.

The Need

STP is established for Minnesota students, ages sixteen and older, who are blind or visually impaired. STP assists in providing unique transition programming which is essential for these students in order to maximize their success in life roles. A needs survey was conducted by the Steering Committee, which included representatives from the Department of Jobs and Training, State Services for the Blind, Metro ECSU/MetroSPLISE, Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Resource Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Minnesota Academy for the Blind, and the University of Minnesota. In this survey, Special Education Directors were asked to identify the number of students who are blind or visually impaired and need specialized transition services. Many students were identified state-wide as needing programming that would address their unique needs as individuals with vision impairments in one or more of the five transition areas found on their individual education plan (IEP).

Given the low incidence of the disability and the extensive academic requirements of the regular school day, such specialized programming is difficult to implement at the local level. Some transition program demands can best be met by bringing students of like needs together for short-term, intensive programming.

Participant Disabilities
- Blind/visually impaired

Ages Served
- 16 and older

Areas of Collaboration
- Joint Transition Planning
- Multiple Funding
- Information Sharing
- Program Sharing
- Evaluation Sharing
- Joint Teaching Efforts

Types of Groups Collaborating
- Former participants and parents
- State Services for the Blind
- Employment Programs
- Job Training Programs
- School Districts
- Vision Programs
- Department of Education
- Colleges and Universities

Meeting the Need

The goal of this program is to assist students with visual impairments in developing the necessary skills that will maximize their potential in achieving vocational and personal independence. This program consists of a three-week supervised living situation, during which time

each student will be instructed in and evaluated on two or three of the following categories based on assessed needs indicated by his or her IEP and individual written rehabilitation plan (IWRP).

- Job Training and Work Experience
- Home Living
- Community Participation
- Leisure and Recreational Opportunities
- Post-secondary Training and Learning
- Social and Emotional Issues
- Orientation and Mobility (travel training) in a metropolitan environment

Students applying for the program should be planning to attend post-secondary education, or to enter competitive employment upon graduation, and be capable of living independently after training. Approximately twenty-four students who are blind or visually impaired attend the program each year.

The host district for STP is Intermediate District 287/Hennepin Technical College, which is responsible for staff and program supervision.

Results

Outcomes of this program include providing young adults with visual impairments:

- Improved problem-solving skills.
- Additional and refined personal independence skills in the areas of home living and community participation.
- Increased awareness of community resources.
- Improved independent travel skills.
- An informal support network stemming from socialization and discussions with peers with visual impairments.
- Exposure to and contact with successful adults with visual impairments.
- Exposure to a variety of work settings through job shadowing and work experience.

To achieve these outcomes, the program is specifically designed to approximate young adults' living situation as realistically as possible and to give students contact with successful adults with visual impairments. Adults with visual impairments are employed as instructors in the program, and community members with visual impairments serve as models and enhance the program by providing job shadowing experiences.

Comments

Evaluations show the summer 1992 pilot program was a great success. Twenty-three students completed the program, and ninety-one percent of the parents felt that the program had a positive impact on their children. Because of the success of this pilot program, the Steering Committee recommended that STP continue to be offered to Minnesota students with visual impairments.

Groups Collaborating

- Consumers, former participants of the Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP)

- Consumers, parents of potential and past participants
- State Services for the Blind
- District 287, Vocational Outreach Services (VOS)
- *Jobs and Training Partnership Act (JTPA), Summer Youth Employment Program*
- McDonalds' *McJobs* Program
- Metro area school districts
- Metro area Vision Programs, Consulting Teachers of Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialists
- Metro ECSU (Educational Cooperative Services Unit)/MetroSPLISE (Strategic Planning for Low Incidence Services in Education)
- MetroSPLISE Coordinating Council, Special Education Directors
- Minnesota Department of Education
- Minnesota Resource Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Minnesota State Academy for the Blind
- University of Minnesota

Community Education – Taking it to the People

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District 742 Community Education
Administration Building, 628 Roosevelt Road, St. Cloud, MN 56301
Contact: Mary Bauer, (612) 251-1733

Overview

District 742 Community Education in St. Cloud has as its mission to "address the changing needs of individuals and groups through a process of lifelong learning by initiating partnerships, assessing needs, seeking ongoing funding, and providing services." In District 742, that mission includes providing a variety of services to persons with disabilities – including persons making the transition from school to adult living.

The Need

Persons with disabilities have a variety of needs related to post-secondary education, community activities, home living, and recreation which can best be addressed by a collaborative approach between schools and community agencies. Community education can be a partner in ensuring that persons with disabilities have opportunities to become active participants in their community.

Meeting the Need

District 742 Community Education has been responsive to a number of requests in the St. Cloud area affecting services for persons with disabilities. Some examples include:

- Meeting with residents at a local apartment building for persons with disabilities to assess their needs and then design recreational activities to improve their contacts with non-disabled community members.
- Assisting the Minnesota Head Injury Association in setting up ongoing recreational activities for persons with head injuries.
- Responding to a request by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to improve relationships in four apartment buildings between residents with low incomes, residents who are elderly and residents with disabilities. Community Education provided educational programs and recreational events, in collaboration with HRA, which provided marketing, supervision and transportation.
- Developing a cooperative educational and recreation program with Hope Community Support Center, a drop-in center for persons with chronic and persistent mental illness.

Participant Disabilities

- All disabilities

Ages Served

- Primarily adults

Areas of Collaboration

- Collaborative Planning
- Program Sharing
- Training
- Support for Organizational Development

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Minnesota Head Injury Association
- Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- St. Cloud Area Disabilities Council
- DRS
- Chamber of Commerce
- St. Cloud Area Personnel Association
- Bar Association
- United Way
- Independent Living Centers
- Central Minnesota Occupational Safety & Health Council
- Area Non-Profit Groups
- Local Government Agencies and Civic Groups

District 742 Community Education has also worked with the business community and human service agencies to develop a workshop on the Americans with Disabilities Act, resulting in the formation of a Chamber of Commerce division for human services agencies.

Results

District 742 Community Education has improved services for numerous persons with disabilities in the St. Cloud area by working collaboratively with other community agencies. The results of those collaborative efforts are an improvement in educational, recreation and employment services that endure over time due to the involvement of all the agencies pooling their resources to improve community living for persons with disabilities in the St. Cloud area.

Comments

District 742 Community Education depends on a collaborative model to identify needs and to develop partnerships to improve transition services for persons with disabilities. Community Education can be an overlooked resource in local communities.

Groups Collaborating

- Catholic Charities
- Minnesota Head Injury Association
- Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- St. Cloud Area Disabilities Council
- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce
- St. Cloud Area Personnel Association
- Stearns-Benton Bar Association
- United Way of St. Cloud
- Central Minnesota Center for Independent Living
- City of St. Cloud
- Central Minnesota Occupational Safety & Health Council
- St. Cloud Area of Non-Profit Associations
- Local government agencies

STAR Program – a System of Technology to Achieve Results

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Overview

With the passage of the federal Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, Minnesota received one of the first federal grants from the National Institute on Disability Research and Rehabilitation (NIDRR) designed to help states develop programs for individuals with disabilities. The STAR Program of the Governor's Advisory Council on Technology for People with Disabilities has as its mission to create a state-wide, consumer-responsive network of resources related to assistive technology.

To promote the expansion and creation of assistive technology services to persons with disabilities who are under-served or unserved in Minnesota, STAR instituted a grants program whereby organizations throughout the state could apply for funds. As the grants are limited to one year, emphasis is placed on local capacity building through the establishment of service collaboration, sharing of resources and information. People Achieving Change Through Technology (PACTT), is one example of how assistive technology services for an under-served population can be created through funds from STAR and a commitment to collaboration.

The Need

There is not currently a state-wide plan to deliver assistive technology to people with disabilities. Access to service providers for evaluation and training is almost non-existent in many parts of the state. Vendors and other distributors tend to locate in the Twin Cities and other metropolitan areas, often leaving those in rural communities without technology devices or related services. Coordination among the existing service providers is hampered by the distances and weather. Funding is scarce not only for the technology itself but also for organizations to provide technology-related services such as evaluation, assessment, training, modification and customization, and repair.

Meeting the Need

In 1990, a number of consumers and parents involved with ARC Olmsted County discussed their needs related to the use of computers. They formed PACTT and were originally housed in space donated by the Development Achievement Center (DAC) for about a year. The Center used a collection of computers and technology from ARC Olmsted County and the personal computers of the Coordinator. At the same time, the Rochester Community College (RCC) was looking for ways to better meet the needs of their students with disabilities and approached PACTT for assistance. The RCC had some adapted computers and support services, but did not have the expertise to fully meet the needs of their students.

Participant Disabilities

- **All disabilities**

Ages Served

- **All**

Areas of Collaboration

- **Information Sharing**
- **Funding**
- **Training**

Types of Groups Collaborating

- **Advisory Councils**
- **PACTT**
- **Colleges**

PACTT assisted the RCC in setting up a more comprehensive computer lab for their students which would also be available to individuals with disabilities in the community. The PACTT Coordinator trained the RCC instructors on various types of technology available and provided training for students in the use of technology in exchange for the space and equipment. One of the challenges for students at the college had been how to take exams. Through PACTT's efforts, students are now able to take their exams independently through large print programs, print and voice recognition systems, and closed circuit television with proctoring offered by PACTT.

In 1991, PACTT received $25,000 from STAR to augment the equipment in the lab and expand their technical assistance to the community. The grant targeted the needs of persons with visual impairments in using computer technology and also expanded outreach service to persons with disabilities in the large Southeast Asian refugee population in the eleven counties in southeast Minnesota. PACTT worked with various cultural organizations to produce and distribute information about PACTT and the efficacy of assistive technology in native languages.

To further expand its services, PACTT formed a volunteer committee to focus on fund-raising and promotion of contractual agreements with state agencies to provide fee for services to employers and other community groups.

Results

The effects of the creation and expansion of PACTT are rippling throughout the southeastern portion of Minnesota. Students with disabilities are better able to access appropriate technology through personal discovery in the PACTT lab and professionals and service providers now have a information resource for computer technology in their area.

In the three years that STAR has provided funding for organizations throughout Minnesota to develop or expand technology related programs, sixteen community projects have provided services affecting the lives of over five thousand individuals with disabilities and their family.

Comments

Those wishing to be considered for funding from STAR should:

- Document local expertise or interest in assistive technology.
- Assemble a working group composed of providers and technology users to capitalize on each other's areas of expertise.
- Identify the unmet needs of programs that come into contact with potential technology users, such as colleges, schools, churches, centers for independent living, and local businesses. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, more organizations are needing assistance in meeting the accommodation needs of people with disabilities.
- Collaborate to develop a plan to provide the services to those programs through sharing of resources such as space or equipment or direct financial support.

Groups Collaborating

- STAR
- Governor's Advisory Council on Technology for People with Disabilities
- PACTT
- Rochester Community College

Using Technology to Access the Library

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St. Mary's Campus of the College of St. Catherine
2500 6th Street S, Minneapolis, MN 55454
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Overview

This project was developed under a one-year, community-based assistance grant funded by the Minnesota STAR Program. Its primary goal was to explore the ways in which computer technology and adaptive devices (such as speech synthesizers and large print displays) could be used in a library setting to make information accessible to individuals who are blind. Once the information-access strategies were developed, fifteen college students who were blind were taught how to use on-line card catalogs, electronic databases, an Arkenstone scanner, a CD-ROM based encyclopedia and other computer-accessible sources of information. The program also conducted outreach efforts with library staff at other colleges and universities, and through the American and Canadian Library Associations, to promote the effective access to information by people with disabilities.

The Need

Libraries have traditionally been very inaccessible to people who are blind or have other print disabilities. However, changes in the way library information is stored and retrieved and the availability of computer access technology, have made it possible to make today's libraries fully accessible to this population. There was a need to try to connect these two distinct forms of technology and to bring the results of this linkage to both the blindness and library communities.

Meeting the Need

St. Mary's Campus undertook an effort to obtain Technology Assistance Act funds (PL 100-407) from the Minnesota STAR Program to support the development of an accessible library for blind students. This grant supported staff time for a project director, librarian, and computer programmer to develop and implement an access strategy in the library. It also provided funds to purchase necessary adaptive equipment such as an optical character recognition device, speech synthesizer, CD-ROM drive, and software. Once there was a basic access strategy and the equipment was installed, the program worked collaboratively with other individuals to develop a mechanism for teaching students who are blind to use the system. An adapted technology specialist from the University of Minnesota and a vision teacher from Intermediate District 287 contributed their expertise in curriculum development and teaching. The course was piloted for fifteen blind students in August 1992, and has been offered in less formal arrangements with an additional ten students. Information about this project has been disseminated to Minnesota State Services for the Blind, librarians in the state, as well as to the American and Canadian Library Associations.

Participant Disabilities

- Persons with blindness and visual impairment

Ages Served

- High school to adult

Areas of Collaboration

- Installation and de-bugging of computer equipment
- Developing Course Materials
- Team-teaching
- Disseminating Information

Types of Groups Collaborating

- Colleges and Universities
- School Districts
- STAR Program

Groups Collaborating

- St. Mary's Campus of the College of St. Catherine
- University of Minnesota
- Intermediate District 287/Hennepin Technical College
- Minnesota STAR Program

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